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THE STORIE OF ASNETH.

AN UNKNOWN MIDDLE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF A LOST
LATIN VERSION.

The Storie of Asneth is one of the many Jewish embroideries upon the concise narrative of Holy Writ. It treats of the life and vision of Asenath, daughter of Potiphar, priest of Heliopolis, who was a maiden pure and proud, despising all men, till she fell under the magic spell of the personality of the great Joseph, "God's strong man." Asenath loved him, the story tells us, at first sight, and grieved so much at his refusal to kiss an idol worshipper that she discarded the gods of Egypt, fasted seven days in sack-cloth and ashes, and at last in a vision was told by an angelic visitor that her sore penance was accepted, and Joseph granted to be her lord. In proof of the truth of the message was performed upon her hand the pretty miracle of the bees of paradise. Her marriage to Joseph followed; and when Pharaoh's son sought to carry her off with the aid of Gad and Dan, Joseph's more truly born brothers, Benjamin, Simeon, and Levi, saved her from danger.

The narrative is an attractive one, as mediaeval legends go, and we can commend that fair and well-born lady's taste who desired her chaplain, or some person of the kind, to translate the Latin of the Story into English. Though he was "dull with dotage," "lame and unlusty," he "meeked him to his mistress," and taking the story, not from its Greek original, but as he found it in a Latin version from which Vincent of Beauvais had abridged it long before for his *Speculum Historiale*, (VI, cxviii—cxxiv), he produced a curious hybrid of poetry, having the sing-a-song-of-sixpence lilt of *Gamelyn*, and the stanzaic form of Chaucer's *Troilus*.

This worthy cleric lived, I suppose, not far from Warwickshire, and not long after the death of Chaucer. He was fam-

iliar with the vocabulary of an earlier age than his own, and had not listened in vain to the passing minstrel. He seems, as we read him between the lines of the *Prologue* and *Epilogue*, to have sincerely loved his mistress, and to have regretted her loss with real affection.

The uneven jog of his lines, and the abundance of cumbersome rhyme-tags, hinder our enjoyment of his poem. If we forgive him these faults, we must admit that he gave his lady a not unworthy rendering of his original. What that original was, I give a hint, by printing at the foot of the page the story as it occurs in Vincent of Beauvais. The prayer of Asenath was omitted in that abridgment, along with certain minor details, such as Potiphar's reasonable desire to have his daughter married from his own door; but the phraseology of the *Speculum* is elsewhere reproduced by the English writer with such exact fidelity, that, except for the suppressions above noted, we must consider the Vincentian narrative an accurate copy of the earlier Latin text. Of this *Historia Assenech*, as Vincent calls his authority, I know no copy in existence; and leave the question to those more familiar than myself with the history of Hebrew literature.

The *Storie of Asneth* exists, so far as I know, only in the volume known as the Ellesmere MS. No. 4, folios 121a—132a. The MS. contains Lydgate's *Wikked Tong*, *Ram's Horn*, *So as the Crabbe*, and *Daunce of Machabree*, and Hoccleve's *De Regimine Principum*, all very good texts of the first half of the fifteenth century. In a different hand, though of not much later date, occurs our poem. The writing is penned with monastic care, the letters small and clear, and the abbreviations scrupulously marked. The "p" is made like "y", and the "n" like "u", while "G" is very like "S". The divisions of the tale are marked by letters illuminated in a ribbon design, not ill drawn. The vellum is marked with a plummet for writing, 43 lines to the page, enclosed by vertical and horizontal lines the full way of the page. The quires of the small quarto are unmarked for the binder, or if marked originally, have been

clipped. The catalogue of Lord Ellesmere's collection at Bridgewater House, soon to be published, will contain a more complete description of the MS. than here needs to be given. I am indebted to the librarian at Bridgewater House, Mr. Strachan Holme, for his kindness in arranging, after permission had been obtained from the Earl of Ellesmere, for the photographing of the MS.

My text is copied from these photographs, such alterations as I make being chiefly insertions necessary to the sense of the line, and clearly indicated. The exact MS. reading is given in such cases in footnotes. I have in half-a-dozen instances supplied translations of rare words. The numerous archaic words in the poet's dialect make one suspect in him an intentional affectation of an obsolete style.

For a bibliography of the four-text edition of the Greek original, and the Syriac, Ethiopic, Slavic, and Armenian translations, one may consult the excellent article by the Rabbi of Temple Beth-El, Dr. Kohler Kaufman, in the Jewish Encyclopedia, under *Asenath*. Dr. Kaufman points out the pronouncedly Christian character of the cross upon the honey, and the reference to bread of life. He gives an admirable summary of the story, too long to quote here. Most important for this paper, however, are his translations from the original of Asenath's prayer, which show that the English translator followed his lost Latin original at that point with the same fidelity observable in the passages covered by Vincent's version.

The heroine's name is in the original Greek "*Ἀσνεθ*", from a Hebrew Asenath. Thus the English version has a nearer resemblance to the original than Vincent's Assenech.

THE STORY OF ASNETH.

PROLOGUE.

As I on hilly halkes logged me late,
Beside ny of a ladi sone was I war;
La bele me desired in englysh to translate

The latyn of that lady, Asneth putifar.

- 5 And I answered, "ma bele, langage I lakke,
To parfourme youre plesir, for yt ys ful straunge
That broken tuskes shold wel harde nuttis crakke,
And kerue out the kernelis, to glade *with* yowre *graunge*;
For lame and vnlusty, now age hath me left,
- 10 Mi spiritis are spended, I lakke sapience,
Dulled I am with dotage, my reson ys me reft,
Prived and departed from al eloquence,
So my seson ys passed with language to iape.
Hit ys not fetis for to see a cowe in a cage
- 15 Ye' desire to make a fool of my lordis ape.

¹MS. The.

- He plesed neuer lady wel þat lakked corage,
For as þe oule ys vn able to blase þe sunne bemys,
So ys þe moselyng molle to iaile þe rede rose,
And as able ys þe asse to danielis dremys,
- 20 As þe cukkou *with* crochētis ony countour to close."
And when daunger deynusly here desire refused,
Labele ful benignely sayde to me þan,
"That seruant ys not to blame, but fully excused,
That meketh hym to his maystresse, & doth as he can."
- 25 Concluded þus with gentillesse, I toke on me þe cure,
Asneth storie to *translate* after my cunyng,
Fro latyn into englysh as god me sendeth oeure.
Gyde þis werke, gracious lord, and graunte it good endyng,
Utterali the latyn in englysh to transpose,
- 30 Hit is nuyus, but þe sentence I schal sue *in trace*,
And yf ye fynde fautes, grave hem *with* yowr glose,
I *pray* þow thus, my maystresse, of yowre good *grace*.

THE STORY.

- Pharao the famus kyng of egipt land aboute,
The firste yeer of seven yeeris of plentevus abundance,
- 35 The fifthe day, in þe secunde monthe, he sende Ioseph oute

To purveie wete for þe peple of his obeisance;
 And in the ferthe monthe, þe eyhtethe day, to make pur-
 veance

Ioseph cam into þe cuntre of helinpoleos,
 And gadered whete of that region, nobeli sprang his loos.

- 40 And in þat cite þere was a prince of Pharao the kynges,
 That was wondir noble and riche, and of gret prudence,
 Sad of conseyl, meke, and wise, in alle maner thyngys;
 Chief counseilour to Pharao for his intelligence.
 Above alle princes he was preferred for his excellence;
 45 Of Helinpoleos preest, Putifar, so men did hym calle,
 Honoured in alle egipt of gret and of smalle.

- This prince hadde a dowter dere, Asneth was her name,
 A virgine ful specious and semely of stature,
 Of eyhtene yeer age sche was, *without*e ony blame,
 50 Florishyng in here beaute, the most comely creature
 Of egipt, and alle virgines sche passed in feture.
 Not lyke the dowhtres of egipt in here resemblance,
 But assemblyng the hebrees in colour and countenance.

Vincenti Bellovacensis Speculum Historiale ex Libro vjto., capitulis cxviii-cxxiiii.

cxviii. *De sublimacione eiusdem (Iosephi) et arrogancia Assenech.* Joseph xxx annorum erat cum stetit coram pharaone somnoque eius exposito, sublimatus & dux egipti constitutus .s. anno iacob cxxi, ut postea potebit ac pro hoc anno tercię etatis .cclxxxvi. mundi uero secundimillesimo .cc. et .xxix. Dedit autem ei pharao uxorem assenech filiam putifar uirginem ex qua nati sunt ei filii manasses & effraim. Inter hec autem apis rex argiuorum in egipto menphin condidit. *Ex historia Assenech.* In primo autem anno .vii. annorum pubertatis misit pharao ioseph ut congregaret frumenta, qui uenit in fines elyopoleos, cuius regionis princeps erat putifar sacerdos princeps satraporum, & consiliarius pharaonis huius filia erat assenech pulcra super omnes uirgines terre per omnia similis filiabus hebreorum. elata & superba. despiciens omnes virorum quam etiam nullus unquam uiderat uirorum. Erat enim turris coniuncta domni putifarıs magna

Of stature semeli as sair, specious as rebekke,
 55 Fair formed of feturis, assemblyng to rachel.
 Her cors was ful comely of hue, hed & nekke.
 Cumfortable, of cuntenance, hit becam here wel;
 Of here souerain beaute al egipt gan tel,
 And praysed here in alle þat lande, so noble was here fame,
 60 That bataile among princes children was ioyned for þat
 dame.

But when þat pharaois eldist child, his sone & his heir,
 Herde telle of this ladi, to his fadir he wente right,
 And said, "graunte me to my wyf asneth the feyr."
 But pharao denyed hym, and answered to the knyght,
 65 "Thu schalt haue to þin astate a ladi of more myght,
 The kyngis dowter of moab, of noble alliance,
 A comeli quene, fair and free, evene to þi plesance."

But asneth, þat was so feir, soleyne she was with al,
 Dispyng eche man deynusly, and prowde of here corage.
 70 A ful high tour was bild for here, of werk þat was rial,
 Ioynnyng to hire fadir hous, and aboue it vpon stage
 Ten chambres for here wer bild, of precious parage.
 The firste was fair and large, with porfereit stonis walled,
 Poudred with precious polimites, of diuerse colours called.
 75 With carpettis of cloth of gold hit was laid abowte,
 And in the wallis here egipt godis sette in sundry wyse,
 Wrouht of goold & siluer wel, of hem sche had gret doute,
 For eueri day to the same sche dide sacrifice.

& excelsa. super quam erat cenaculum, habens Thalamos x. quorum primus magnus & decorus lapidibus porfreticis stratus. parietes lapidibus preciosis induti loquearia aurea & erant intus egipciorum (decorum) aurei & argentei quos colebat assenech & timebat & quotidie eis immolabat. Secundus Thalamus seruabat ornatus assenech in auro & argento & lapidibus et lintheaminibus preciosis. Intercio Thalamo erant omnia bona terre erat enim promptuarium assenech. reliquæ vii.vii. uirginum erant quæ illi seruiebant pulcre uirgines quibus locutus non erat uir. neque puer masculus. In Thalamo assenech erant tres fenestre. prima magna ualde perspicuens ad orientem.

In the secunde chamber was here atire, of ful riche assise,
 80 Goold, siluer, *precious stonis*, and garnementis gaye,
 Schetis of silk, and robis fyne, of ful riche araye.

The thridde chamber was for stoor stuffed as ye shul here
 Of alle goodis *þat* growe on erthe, to mannys sustinance,
 The seuen chambiris¹ remenant were ordeyned on *þis*
manere.

85 For seven maidenen, *þat* lowly serued here *with* plesance,
 T[h]ise were here egipt eveneldis, to here daliance,
 Fair of face, bright of ble, as sterre *in* *þe* firmament,
 With man ne manl[i]child speke *þei*, in no *manere* entent.

In the chief chambir of asneth *þer* were wyndowys three;²
 90 The firste retardyng to the est, the secunde was south³
 right,
 T[h]e thirde lay north upon *þe* strete, in swyche *manere*
 degre
 That of alle that passed by, sche mihte haue a syght.
 In this chamir a bed was raid, of goold and *purpur* bright;
 Context it was *with* iacinth and *purpur* bise *with* all:
 95 Alone lay asneth *in* this bed, that riche was and riall.

A gret halle was bild abowte, *with* wallis wonder hie,
 With foure yren gatis spered faste and stronge;
 And kepte *with* eyhtene men of armes, harneised surely.
 Yet *þer* were planted inside *þe* halle⁴ trees faire behonge,

¹ chambir was *sic* MS.

² MS. there.

³ sought MS.

⁴ Here the scribe copied at first the second line below but erased and corrected his error.

secunda ad meridiem. tertia ad aquilonem. erat ibi lectus aurens stratus peplis purpureis. auro tetis ex iacincto & purpura & bysso. in quo dormiebat assenech sola. & uir nunquam sederat super illum & erat atrium magnum in circuitu domus. cuius paries excelsus ualde. lapidibus quadratis erat constructus. in quo atrio erant quatuor porte

100 *With frutes þat were delectable, and fair leues among,
And a cundite beside þe halle, þat ran as cristall clere,*

*That moisted the trees lustily, and dide to hem gret chere.
The fame of gentil ioseph sprang grefly, and aroos
To alle þe lordis of egipt land, with gret reuerence;*

105 *And when he was come into þe cuntre of helinpoleos,
He sende xii wyse to putiphar preest, seiynge in sentence,
“Greteth the wel oure sire ioseph, and noteth yn aduertence,
To dyner at midday to thi hous, he cometh for his cumfort,
In the shade fro the sunne, to take þere his disport.”*

110 *And putifar, plesed plesantly, sayd with wise ioiynge,
“Blessed be the lord god of Ioseph, þat my noble sire
Ys comyng toward my hous, to me yt is plesyng.”
He called þe prevost of ys hous, & sayd, “I the require,
Make redi a grete feste, and most deynteus to desire,
115 And gouerne it goodly, I the charge, in þi beste aray,
For ioseph þe strong man of god schal come to vs this day.”*

*Then herde asneth þat her fadir & her modir bothe
Wer come in heruest fro the feeld of here heritage
And sayde, “with ioie I schal go, and se hem forsothe;”*

120 *And hasted here forth busily, agayns hem in passage,
Clothed comely in bright byse⁵, lykyng to her lynage,
And wrought with goold of iacint, a girdel of goold þer to,
With armillis⁶ aboute here handis, and here feet also.*

A bie⁷ of bright burned goold aboute here nekke was bent

125 *Pyght ful of precieuse stonys, & graue in were all
The Idolis namys of egipt, plesant to here entent,*

⁵ From O.F. *byssum*, a kind of fine linen.

⁶ From O.F. *armilles*, bracelets.

⁷ From O.F. *buie*, chain.

*ferree quas custodiebant simul xviii uiri fortissimi iuuenes armati.
erat in dextra parte atrii fons aque uiuentis & deorsum fontis cisterna
suspiciens eius aquam. et irrigans omnes arbores in atrio plantatas.
que pulcre erant et fructiferi. erat autem assenech magna ut sara
speciosa ut rebecca, formosa ut rachel.*

And aboue here hed was sett a riche coronall,
 That constreyned here fair frount, þat was so virginall,
 Here hed was couered with terestre, & went forth with
 plesance
 130 And haileed here fadir & here modir, with comely cunte-
 nance.

Ful curteysly sche kyste hem, and [þei] gretly gan ioye,
 To se here doughter so honestly, in riche ornature.
 The deyntevus frutes of þe feld, to here þei dide emploie,
 That delicious were^a and delectable, & noble in nature.
 135 þe mayde reioysed of the frutes, þat were ful mature,
 Of figes, dates, pomgarnettes, & of grapes grete,
 Of doue briddes, and thir frutes, þat sauery were & swete.

And putifar sayde to asneth, "The closett dore þe shitte."
 She did so, and he here kiste, and saide, "my dowter dere,
 140 Novellis nowe I schall the telle, tend now to my witte,
 The myhty man, ioseph, of god, þis day wil^o be here,
 And he ys gouernour to saue egipt, by pharao saunz pere,
 A maide clene as ye be, so virgine he ys speciall;
 I schal marie yow to hym, & make yow his conthorall."

145 And when asneth had herd here fadir þise wordis reherse,
 With straunge yes on hym she loked, here colour gon dis-
 teyne,
 And seide to hym, "why seie ye thus, my worship to
 reuerse,
 To take me caytyf to a straunger? of hym I haue disdeyne,

^a vere sic MS.

^o wel MS.

cxix. De hoc quod ioseph de cultura ydolorum redarguit. Misit ergo ioseph ad putifarem nuncium quod uellet diuertere ad domum eius. et gauisus est putifar. et dixit filie sue quod ueniret ioseph fortis dei et uellet eam illi tradere uxorem. Que indignata respondit. se nolle dari uiro captivo. sive filio regis. illis autem loquentibus uenit qui diceret ioseph adesse. & fugit assenech in cenaculum sursam. et

A futif he ys, by bargayn bouht, & more I say yow pleine,
 150 That herdis son of chanan his lady wold haue fuyled,
 In prison therefore he was put, & all worshyp spuyled.

“And after yt happid þat pharao, as he lay in slepe,
 Dreyht¹⁰ was dered in his dremys, diuersely dremyng,
 And then this ioseph was take out of the prison depe,
 155 To rede hym right the redeles of his sweuenyng.
 The olde wyfis of egipt han craft in þat cunnyng,
 And þerfore þat dreme redere I vtterly forsake,
 And take me to the kyngis sone, my marie & my make.”¹¹

And as putifar with his douhter stood þus talkyng,
 160 There come on of his meyne, and þus to hym saide,
 “Ioseph ys come to youre gatis, I do yow to wytyng.”
 Anf when he spak of ioseph, anon asneth the mayde
 Ascended to here cenacle, to the wyndow sche here braide,
 þat lay estward in the chambir of here statly tour,—
 165 To se ioseph, for hir fadir of hym spak gret honour.

And putifar went forth with his wyf & with his kynrede,
 To mete with ioseph, þat gentil Iuge, as man þat was sage;
 He commaunded þe porteris sone þe gatis up to sprede,
 And in entred Ioseph þanne, upon þat terrage,
 170 Standyng on pharaos secunde chare, statli opon stage,
 With foure stronge stoute stedis, þer inne were drawyng,
 That were white as the snow, and prowde of here likyng.

¹⁰ Past part. fr. A.S. *dreccan*, oppressed (?).

¹¹ MS. take.

uenit ioseph sedens in curru. secundo. pharaonis qui erat totus aurens quem trahebat quatuor equi albi sicut niu. frenis deauratis & erat ioseph indutus tunica candida splendidissima. & palleo purpureo et auro texto. et corona aurea super caput eius. et in circuitu corone erant xii. lapides electi. super quos erant .xii. astra aureo et uirga regia in manu et ramus oliue fructu pinguiissimo & uenerunt putifar & uxor eius in occursum eius & adorauerunt eum. & intrauit ioseph in atrium

þe briddes were fineli gild, the trais of noble atire,
 Ioseph clothed was al in white, couered *with* *purpure* palle,
 175 Wrought *with* branches of bright byse, contextit *with* goold
 wire,

A coroune of goold on his heed, þat riche was and rialle,
 And in þe cercle þerof were sette twelf stonis imperialle,
 And aboue the saide stonis, twelf sterris of goold pure,
 With a sceptir in his hand, that noble was in nature.

180 A braunche *with* beries of oliue tree, in hand he bar *with*
 alle,

Ful plenteus it was of frut, þerin was gret fatnesse;
 Then entered Ioseph In at the gatis, & cam in to þe halle,
 And þe peple was voided sone, *with* gret busynesse;
 The porteris shitte þe gatis faste, *with* moche hastynesse,
 185 And putifar, his wyf, and his kynred, *with* worthi gouer-
 nance,
 Except asneth, honoured ioseph *with* obeisaunce.

Ioseph descended of his chaar, glorious to beholde,
 And tok hem on his right syde, thankyng in noble wyse.
 Grett ioye there was mad, among yong & olde,

190 Save when asneth saw ioseph, here sorwe gan arise,
 Here spirites failed, here bodi trembled, his noblei to dis-
 pise,
 "Alas," sche saide, "I haue misdo, dispisyng þis nobil man,
 When I called hym herdis sone of the land of chanan."

"And now he cometh, as the sunne fro heuen *with* his
 bemys,

195 Radiant richeli in his chaar, *with* glorious excellence,

& clausa sunt ostia atrii & uidit assenech ioseph & conturbata est
 super sermone quem dixerat de eo. & dixit. Ecce sol uenit de celo
 ad nos in curru suo. nesciebans quod ioseph filius dei erat. Quis
 enim hominum tantam potuit generare pulcritudinem. aut quis uentus
 mulieris tantum portare lumen. & intrauit ioseph in domum putifar
 & lauerit pedes eius & ait ioseph. que est mulier illo que erat in

Passyng peerles and plesant, in gouer[n] yng of remys,
 With beaute bounte he is braced, & grace of influence,
 Allas! that euere I dispised hym, or made hym resistance,
 Godis sone, I wot, is ful noble of alliance,
 200 And the saueour of al egipt, withoute variance.

“Who was euer gete of a man, so fair, so fresh of face?
 Or what womman myghte conceive, & bere so moche light?
 Of most wrecched now I am, forfeded I haue hys grace,
 When I dispurned hym to my fadir, *with* wordis unright.
 205 Now wyl I hide me fro his face, and kepe fro his sight,
 And yet nothyng fro hym ys hid, he hath so gret cunningge,
 But mercy, gret god of ioseph, of my missayngge!

“I wolde my fadir wolde me gife to ioseph in seruice,
 For euer þerto I wolde assente, to be his owen *seruant*.”
 210 By that had ioseph wasshe his feet, & in noble wyse
 A boord was laid for hym apart, þat was to hym plesant,
 For *with* þe eqiptianis in etyng he was not conuersant,
 But escheued heem in here metis, and of hem had drede,
 And after he spak to putifar, thus, and to his kynrede,—

215 “What womman was sche þat, that in þe wyndow stod
 Of þe cenacle, as I cam In? sche ys ageyns my herte,
 Remeveth here sone out of þis hous, for marryng of my
 mod.”
 For ioseph dred wanton wymmen, þe good man to *peruerte*,
 þerfore he saide, “haue her out that I may be querte.”
 220 For he was chast & virgine pure, & clene in continence,
 Dredyng *with* fere the infeccion of femenyn insolence.

cenaculo ad fenestram abeat nunc de domo ista timebat enim ne
 molesta esset illi sicut omnes alie que certatim mittebant nuncios
 amoris ei cum muneribus diuersi generis.

Quos periciebat cum indignacione & iniuria & ait putifar. Domine
 filia mea est uirgo & odit homines omnes uirorum quem unquam
 uidit uir nisi ego & tu hodie. siuis ueniat & salutet te. Cogitans ergo

And for as moche as þe doltirs of þe dukys grete
 of egipt wowed him ofte tyme, to wanton wikkednesse,
 þerfore he fledde here felawship, and ofte tyme did hem
 þrete,

- 225 Tho voyde hem fro þe presence of his pure clenness;
 Alle faire femelis of egipt he had in heuynesse,
 For þei desired to slepe *with* hym, he was so amiable,
 But he dispised hem and here menis, in clenness he was
 stable,

- Ant saide, "in þe sight of gret god, of my fadir israel,
 230 I wyl not synne in no wyse, but haue in remembrance
 The commaundementis of my fadir, and euer kepe hem wel;
 For he bad me and my bretheren, *with* oute variaunce,
 To kepe vs clene fro wymmen of *straunge* alliance,
 And saide, þat here felawship wold man *with* deth destruye,
 235 þerfore haue out þe *straunge* womman, nothyng þat sche
 me nuye."

Then seyde putifar þus, "my lord, þe womman þat ye saw
 stande

- Ys non alien, but of her Inne, and howre dowhter dere,
 Hatyng þe cumpanie of alle men; & more I take an hande,
 Sche ys virgine pure and clene, þerfore I *pray* yow here,
 240 That sche may come to yowr presence, & haile yow *with*
 good chere."

And ioseph, gretly ioied, þen, for þat putifar saide
 pat sche loued no man fles[h]ly, but lyued a clene maide,

"pat sche ys a maide," *quod* ioseph, "I loue here the more,
 And as myn own sister, ful wel sche pleseth me;

- 245 Lett here come anon to me." here modir went here fore,

ioseph *quod* si odiebat omnem uirorum numquam ei importuna esset
 .ait patri eius. si uirgo est filia uestra diligo eam sic sororem meam.
 et ascendit mater eius ut adducaret quam statuit in conspectu ioseph,
 & ait pater eius. Saluta fratrem tuum qui odit omnes mulieres
 alienigenas sicut tu omnes uiros. & ait assenech. aue benedicto a deo
 excelso. benedicat te deus qui uiuificat omnia. & dixit putifar filie sue

And brouhte here to his *presence*, þat maide fair & fre,
Here fadir saide to here, ful sone, "*dowhter*, I charge the
Salu þi brother, a maide as þow, of dede & *purpos* pure,
Hatyng alienes & vnclene wymmen, as þu in thi nature."

- 250 Then asneth, nurshid nobely, on knes fair hym grette,
And said, "hail lord, blessed of god, hie heuene kyng."
And ioseph answered, gentilly, hys wordis to her he sette,
"Blisse þe maide þe grete god, þat quikketh al thyng."
þan said þe fadir, "go kis þi brother, dowhter, on my
blessyng."
255 And asneth wente to kysse hym, *after* here fadir hestis,
But ioseph streight his right hand out, & layd yt on here
brestis.

And sayd, "sothly, unsemyng and unsittyng hit ys,
To the man þat schulde serue god, and with his mouth hym
blesse,

- And ete the blessed brede of lyue, and drinke of his chalis,
260 Ony womman alien, or *straunger* for to kesse,
þat blysse mamettis *with* here mouth, & idolis in liknesse,
That are bothe dumbe and dede, & ete brede of here bord,
Ony swych womman for to kysse, hit lyketh not god my
lord.

- "But the man þat worshipeth god his modir kysse he schal
265 Hys sister, his wyf, & his kyndrede, & make hem god
chere."¹²

Ioseph sayd, "I wil departe upon þis same day,
For in þis day god bygan alle his creature,

¹² No break in the MS.

ut oscularetur ioseph quod cum illa uellet facere extendit ioseph
manum suam & posuit ad pectus eius dicens. non decet uirum colentem
deum uiuentem & manducantem panem uite. & calicem incorruptionis
bibentem osculari mulierem alienigenam. osculantem ore suo ydola
surda & muta, et manducantem a mensa eorum panem anchonis &
bibentem de spondis eorum, calicem anedras, calicem occultum. &
unguentem se oleo inscrutabili.

And here after eyhte dayes, sothly as I þe say,
I schal retourne, and dwelle here, & perto do my cure."

270 Putifar thanne, and his kynrede, *with* humblesse of nurture,

Toke at hym his bien aille, *with* ful gentil langage,
And so dide Ioseph at hym, & toke forth his viage.

And asneth abood, soul, alone, *with* seuen virgines clene,
&, greued *with* sorwe, sche wepte sore, to the sunne siled¹³
west,

275 Bred ne water wolde sche noon, by no maner mene.
When nyht cam, alle þei slepte, & wente to here rest
Saue asneth, wakyng allone, lay knockyng nere brest.
For sche hadde take ful gret drede, & shok *with* tremblyng,
Sche was constreyned so *with* sorwe, þat caused here
mournyng.

280 & then sche roos fro here bed, & cam fro her chamber doun,
The gatis wher portere & his men slepte sure,
And to wyndowe faste by sche busked here ful boun,
& there sche drow out a large skyn for here couerture,
And filde þe skyn ful of askes, and after by aventure
285 Sche ascended in to here chamber, the doris fast barryng,
And lay doun on the pavement, and syhed *with* waylyng.

A virgine, þat asneth loued most, herde of here sobbyng,
Alle sixe virgines here felawys anon sche gan up rere,
þei wente to the chambir dore, & herde here syhyng,
290 þei founde the dore lokked faste, þei myhte hit not vnsperre;
Werefore þei cried *with* vois echon, & callid on here there,
¹³ *silē*, glide.

CXX DE PENITENCIA ASSENECH ET CONSOLACIONE
ANGELICA.

Ardiens assenech uerba ioseph contristata est ualde. et plorauit.
et miseratus est ioseph et posuit manum super caput eius et benedixit eam. & gauisa est assenech in benedictione et misit se super

And sayde, "madame what ailes you, and ys your
nuysance?"

Asneth opened not here dore, but sayde in þis wyse,
"Mi heed yt aketh"¹⁴ grevusly, on bed þerfore I lye,
295 I am so sik in al my membris, þat I may not rise,
To open the dore goth fro me; to *your* chambres you hie."
þei passed forth as sche bade, and ansneth (*sic*) privelye
Com to þe chamber where here robis pressed were well,
And drow to here a blacke robe, a cloth of sorwe & deell.

300 That schee had mad for þe deth of here yungger brother;
With þis cloth into here chamber sche returned sone,
And schytte the dore *with* barre & bolt, at trauers upon
othir,
& in haste dide of here robe, with ful moche mone,
(þe riall was *with* bise & goold ful *preciously* bygone,)
305 And so sche did here ceynte of goold, þat riche was of
valour,
And did on her þe blake robe, þe vesture of dolour.

þe coronall þat couered her hed, in the pavement sche yt
laide;
Here byes als and bracelettes of riche orfeoure,
& in the north part of the chamber to a wyndow sche
brayde,
310 And threw hem out by & by, þat noble were of feiture,
Here garmentis of goold, and girdelis of gay garnetture,
And alle here godis of goold & siluer, sche tok hem *in* haste,
With alle þe idolis of egipt, at the wyndow out sche caste.

¹⁴ asketh aketh MS.

lectum suum et infirmitata est pro timore et gaudia. et egit penitencias
a diis quos colebat & abrenunciauit eis. Et manducauit ioseph et bibit.
et cum uellet recedere uoluit eum putifar retinere una die et non
posuit. sic recessit ioseph promittens se .viii. die reuersurum et
accepit assenech tunicam nigram. quod erat indumentum tristicie eius
quam mortuus erat frater eius minor. et clauso super se ostio fleuit

Sche tok here souper araid fore here of wyld foul & fisshes,
 315 þe carcais als of fatte calfis, and of oþer sacrifice,
 þe vesselis for wyne of sacrifice, toupes, cuppis, disshes,
 Cast hem out to straungers houndis, and so did hem dispise
 And sayde, "alas how schod my houndis ete in ony wyse,
 Of this souper of sacrifice, of fals maumetrie?
 320 I take yt þefore to straungers houndis, & forsake al ydol-
 atrie."

And after asneth askes tok, & strewed hem in and oute
 Upon the pauement, & bond her lendis¹⁵ with saccloth for
 penance,
 And did an heue¹⁶ upon here bodi, & bette here breste
 aboute
 With bothe handis, & wepte sore for here ignorance,
 325 & laide here down upon þe askes, with teres of repentance,
 Sobbyn sore with moche sorwe, sett on euery side,
 Al the nyth contynuyng so, til þe morwe tyde.

In the mornynge when she roos, with fen sche was fuyled,
 þat with þe teris and askis were medled so in same,
 330 Sche fil agayn flatt on here face, here body so sche spuyled,
 And lay þere til hit was nyht, asneth¹⁷ by here name.
 So sche meked here by seuen daies, þat noble worthi dame,
 þe eyhte day þe cokkys crew, þe day bygan to sprynge,
 The mayde a lytel lefte up here heed, ful faynt of fastynge.

335 Aftir she roos on here knees, feble sche was and feynt,

¹⁵ Loins.

¹⁶ Hive?

¹⁷ ansneth sic MS.

et proiecit omnia idola sua per fenestram que respiciebat ad aquilonem
 et omnem cenam suam regiam proiecit canibus. et posuit cineres super
 caput suum et super pauimentum, et fleuit amare per .vii. dies et viii.
 die dluculo galli cantauerunt et canes latrauerunt et prospiciens
 assenech per fenestram que respiciebat ad orientem uidit. et ecce stella
 lucifer. et prope eam fissum est celum. et apparuit lux magna. et
 uidens assenech cecidit in faciem suam super cineres. et ecce uir
 descendens de celo stetit super caput assenech. et uocauit eam ex

And lifte up here heed a lite, & syhed wondir sore;
 The maide was meked, & made megre, & with sorwe atteynt
 To a wyndow *þat* lay estwarde sche dressed here *þerfore*,
 & sette here doun undir yt, and saide, "ha lord thyn ore!
 340 What schal I do? were may I go? were schal I haue refute?
 Desolate maide *in* deserte, of cumfort destitute.

Mi fadir, my modir, & my kyn, *þei* wel me haue in hate,
 For I haue disparplid al her goodis, & cast hem vnderfote,
 And forsake me for here douhter, & with me debate,
 345 Who may deliuere fro *þis* daunger, my balis who may bote?
 Yett more ouer in my mynde, with sorwe I mark & note,
þat al my louers *þat* me wowed, I hated in alle uyse,
 Now may *þei* glade on my myschief, & utterly me dispise.

"But *þe* heyhe lord god of ioseph, almyghti in his trone,
 350 He ys Ielous upon his peple, hatyng al idolatrie,
þerfore, dredful lord, to *þe*, now make I my mone,
 For I haue worshiped fals godis, & mortal mamettrie,
 Of here sacrifices I have ete; *mercy þerfore* I crie,
 For the lord god of hebreis ys trewe & *mercyable*,
 355 Long abydyng, mylde and meke, on hem *þat* be unstable.

"He repreueth no *maner* man, that turneth hym with
 penance,
þerfore I wil *returne* to hym, & fro me synne chace,
 I wil forsake al my synnes, and after to his plesance,
 Yete¹⁸ out my *praieres* in his siht, & to his loue me brace,
 360 And yf *þat* I be repentant, he wil tak me to grace,
 For he is *protectour*, and defendour, of fadirles children-
 alle,
þerfore to his grete *mercy* I shall clepe & calle."

¹⁸ *Sic* MS.

nomine, que pro timore non respondit. et uocauit eam secundo assenech
 assenech. que respondit ecce ego domine. quis es. annuncia michi.
 Qui ait. ego princeps domini dei. et princeps exercitus domini. surge
 et sta super pedes tuos et loquar ad te. at leuauit assenech caput.
 et ecce uir per omnia similis ioseph. stola et corona et uirga regia
 cuius uultus sicut fulgar. et oculi eius sicut radii solis. capilli

And þan sche roos out of the place, þer sche satt & stood,
 To þe wyndows, þat to þe est parties hadde here regard;
 365 And saide, "lord god of al rightful, þat madest land &
 flood,
 That inspirest al wysdam in hertis þat ben hard,
 And makyst þynggis inuisible apparent afterward,
 þat hast enhanced heuen an high & stablyd yt aboue the
 wyndes,
 & foundid land upon þe wateris, as creatour¹⁹ to al kyndes,

370 "That hast made þe stonis grete, & wateris of hyght
 depnesse,
 Conseruyng kyndly þi priaptis,²⁰ and to þi vois obeisant,
 þei wyl nawt offende þi maundementis, for in sekirnesse
 To al lyuyng creatures þi word ys lyf plesant,
 þerfore I flute,²¹ lord, to þe, thyn humble suppliant,
 375 Crying to þe *with* my prayer, in thyn hihe *presence*,
 Confessyng to the, my grete synnes, & schewe þe my offence.

"Synnyng, lord, I haue synned, ful gretly in þi syght,
 & worsheped idolis & maumettis agayns þi mageste,
 þerfore to open my mouth to þe, unworthy I am by right,
 380 O lord god, summe tyme I was a proud la[d]y of degre,
 Preferrid in richnesse aboue alle oþer, in worship gret plente
 I hadde, but ful desolate and destitute I am forsake,
 Werefore, lord, I fle to the, to þi mercy I me betake.

¹⁹ MS. creature.

²⁰ From Latin *praeapto*.

²¹ From *fluten*, flit.

capitis ut flamma ignis et uidens assenech timore percussa cecidit in
 faciem suam. quam confortans angelus et eleuans ait. depono cilicium
 istud nigrum quo induta es. et cinctorium tristicie tue. saccunde lumbis
 tuis. et excute cineres de capite tuo. et laua faciem tuam. et manus
 tuas aquo uiuente et orna te ornamentis tuis et loquar ad te. que
 cum ornasset se festinanter rediit ad angelum. cui angelus. denuda
 caput tuum a tristro quam uirgo es. confortare et gaude assenech uirgo.
 quum nomen tuum scriptum est in libro uiuencium et non delebitur
 in eternum ecce ab hodierna die renouata es et uiuificata. et man-

“And as þe infaunt, þat sothly soketh his modir breste,
 385 For drede fleeth to the fadyr, to haue of hym socour,
 So, lord, I sprede out my handis, to þe ys al my treste,
 Take me, lord, & calle me to the, & helpe me *with* þi fauour,
 For þe dwell, þat wod lyoun, will rauesshe me with errour,
 For he is fadir of fals godis of al egipt lande,
 390 But I haue cast hem fro me, & destroyed hem *with* my
 hand.

Deliuere me, lord, fro his powere & fro his mouth me
 drawe,
 Lest on happe he rauesshe me ant sle me, þat grett whale,
 That ys acursyd eternally, by the sentence of þi lawe.
 Receyue me, lord, for fadir & modir refuse me *with* bale,
 395 And seyn, ‘asneth is not our douhter,’ to grete & to smale,
 ‘For sche hath destroyed our godis of goold, & gyfe hem in
 conculcacioun,
 To alle men passyng by þe way in gret abhominacioun.’

“Wherefore I fle to þe, my god, þat art of myhtes most,
 Deliuere me, & spare me, lord, I haue synned by ignorance.
 400 When I called thi child ioseph, in dispite *with* my goost,
 The heerdis sone of chanan, in pride of my bobaunce;
 And now he is aboue alle men, *withoute* variaunce,
 For he þe knoweth for on god, veray lord and trewe,
Perforeþu hast gyfe wytt to hym, wisdam & vertue.

405 “Now, good lord, take me to hym to be his hand maide,
 And I schal wassche louly hys feet, subdue me to his
 seruage,
 Leryng þe knowlych of veray god;” & when sche þus
 had said,

ducabis panem benedictionis et potum bibes incorruptionis que ungeris
 crismate secundo. Ecce dedi te hodie sponsam ioseph et nomen tuum
 non uocabitur amplius assenech sed multi refuggi. nam penitencia
 exorauit pro te altissimum que est filia altissimi. uirgo hylaris ridens
 super et modesta. Cumque quereretur assenech ab angelo nomen eius.
 respondit nomen meum scriptum est digito dei in libro altissimi. et

The sterre lucifer in þe est shewed his visage,
 And þerof asneth was ful glad, & seide in here langage,
 410 "Trowest not god hath my prayer herd, þe messenger lo of
 lyht
 Is rise up!" & sodeynly sche saw a selcouth siht.

Sche saw faste by þe sterre, how heuene partyd in two,
 & a wondir ful gret liht lemed out in þat stede,
 And asneth ferd fel on here face, on þe askes tho,
 415 And a man com down fro heuen, & stood upon here heed,
 Callyn asneth by here name; sche answered not for dred,
 And he called here the secounde tyme, & saide "asneth!
 asneth!"
 Then sche answered, "lo, my lord, & þerwith sche took
 breth,

And saide, "tel me who þu art," & he answered in haste,
 420 "I am a prince of godis hous, & of hys heuenly ost,
 Arise, and stand on thi feet, & be nothyng agast,
 And my wordis schal speke to the to cumfort of þi gost."
 Sche lyfte þen here heed, & saw a man like almost
 Ioseph, with scepter, stole, & coroune, his cheer as lyhtyng
 leem,
 425 & his yes bright shynyng as doth þe sunne beem.

The heris of hys heed, þei were as flame of fire brennyng,
 And asneth, frayd of þe syhte, fel to his feet for fere,
 In so moche þat al here membris were meved with tremb-
 blyng.

And the aungel saide þenne, "asneth, nothing the dere."²²

²² dredere MS.

omnia que in libro illo scripta sunt ineffabilia sunt. nec conuenit
 homini mortali ulla auoire illa ulla dicere.

CXXI DE MENSA ET FAVO QVEM ILLA APPOSVIT ANGELO.
 Et ait assenech tenens summitatem pallii eius. si inueni gratias in
 oculis tuis sede nunc paululum super lectum istum super quem
 nemo unquam sedit et preparabo tibi mensam. et dixit angelus affer

430 Be þu cumforted, an rise up, & on þi feet þe rere,
And I schal speke my wordis to þe after myn entent."
And asneth roos upon here feet at his commaundement.

The aungel saide to asneth, "do of þi blak haire,
& thi garnement of drede, þe saccloth do away,
435 Smyte þe askes fro þi heed, & washe þi face faire,
& þi handis with rennyng water; do on þi riche aray,
þi lynnyn robe, untouched newe, þat glorious ys & gay,
& gird the with þe double ceynt of þi virginite,
And then com to me agayn, & I²³ schal speke to the."

440 Asneth hasted forth anon & did as he desired,
And caste on þe white robe with precious parentis,
With double ceynt gird aboute, & diuersly atired
Aboue þe brestis, & on þe lendis gird on here garnementis,
A lynnyn newe theustre²⁴ vail with riche ornamentis,
445 Here hed was voluped with þat vail, for virginal excellence,
And returned to þe aungel, & stood in his presence.

þe aungel saide, "lai don þi wail, discouere þi hed in haste,
Why dost þu thus? þu art maide, þin heed is fair to se,
As the heed of a yonglyng," þe wail away sche caste,
450 The aungel said, "asneth, maide, of good chere þu be,
Oure lord hath herd þi prayer & þi confession fre;
This fast he saw of vij dayes, & þi lou mekyng,
And þe fen, mad of the askes and of þi gret teryng.

"Be glad, virgine, for þi name ys write in þe book of lif,
455 And schal neuer be don away, but ay in remembrance,

²³ Inserted MS.

²⁴ theustre from þeostre, dark.

cito. et apposuit panem et uinum suaue oleris uetus et mensam nouam.
et ait angelus affer michi et fauum mellis Cumque illa contristata
staret eo cum fauum non haberet, ait ei angelus. intra in cellarium
tuum et inuenies fauum mellis super mensam tuam. et inuenit fauum
candidum sicut niuem et mel mundissimum et odor eius suauis. et
ait assenech. domine non haberam, sed dixisti ex ore tuo sancto et

Lo fro þis day þu art renuwed & quicked fro al strif,
 And þu schalt ete of blessing bred & hue drinke of plesance,
 þu schat be enoynted *with* holi creme of glorious *purveance*,
 And, more, I gif þe in to wyf to ioseph my dere frend,
 460 And ioseph into þi spouse in wordle *with* oute end.

“And þi name schal be called asneth no more,
 But hit schal be moche-of-refute, & so men schul þe calle,
 For peple schul *turne* to good by the, I warne þe bifore,
 And undir þi wynggis þei schul be couered, trustyng in god
 alle,
 465 And attendyng to þe hiest god schul be kept in þi walle,
 For thi penaunce hath *prayd* to hym for þe *euery* hour,
 And upon alle other penantes, in godis name *with* dolour.

“For penance ys þe dere douhter of hiest god in heuene,
 And entendyng upon maidenenes and loueþ you gretly,
 470 And *praieth* for you *euery* hour to god, I telle þe *euene*,
 And for alle repentant in goddis hie name mekly,
 Yt makeþ maidenenes to reste in heuene in place arayd sikerly,
 & renoueleþ virgines clene to goddis dere blessing,
 & purchaseþ (?)²⁸ ham ioye and blisse in wordlis withoute
 endyng.

475 “Penaunce is a maide good, glad, and mesurable,
 The hiest god hath here in lond, his angelis in reuerence,
 I loue here wel, now schal I go, *with* oute ony fable,
 To ioseph, & telle of þe the wordis of my sentence,
 And he schal come þis dai to the, & see thyn excellence,
 480 And *with* ioye loue þe weel, thi spouse be he schall,
 & wedded wyf to hym in wordlis eternall.

²⁸ The MS. here has a word which I cannot make out. The last letters are certainly -aceþ. The first four letters resemble numr.

factum est. unde et odor eius est sicut spiramen oris tui. et subrisit angelus super intelligenciam assenech. et extensa manu tetigit eius dicens. beata es tu quam dimisisti idola et credidisti in deum unum et beati aduenientes domino deo in penitencia. quam comederet de hoc fauo quem fecerunt apes paradisi dei, de rore rosaru, in paradiso.

"& now here me, asneth, maide; do on þi garnementis
Of weddyng now in þi chambre, and atire the *with* all,
And enbclise þi bright beaute, with *precieuse* ornamentis,
485 & go forth to mete ioseph, thi spouse speciall,
For he schal come & see þe, to day, in vesture imperiall."
And after he had endyd his word, asneth, with consolacion,
Worshiped hym do on þe erthe, & said in comendacion,

"Blessed be þi god, most hiest, þat thus þe hath sent,
490 & deliuered me fro derknesse, & depnesse of my bale,
Blessed euer be his name, lord god omnipotent."
& to þe angel afterward þise wordis sho gan availe,
"What is þi name? tel me sone, & give yt me in tale,
þat I mai worship & thanke þe, my lord & my frend,
495 & glorifie þi grete name, in wordle *with* out ende."

The angel saide, "my name is write in godis book in heuen,
With godis fynger fore al othir in the bokys bygynnyng,
For I am þe prince of godis hous, & so I tel þe euen,
þat al þat writen is in þat boke, hit passed mannys
spekyng,
500 Inconuenient þerfore yt ys, to eche man vnsyttyng,
To *commune* or to here of hem, that are celestially,
For þei be gret fro mannys mynde, and wonderfull *with*
all."

Thenne seide asneth, "good lord, lat me fynde grace,
þat I mai knowe þat yt be do, þat þu hast said to me,
505 Gyf thyn handmaide leve to speke in presence of þi face."
The angel said, "spek on, asneth, þi bone I graunte the,"
And sche tok hym by the palle, & said *with* vois ful free,

et ex hoc comedunt omnes angeli dei. et quicumque ex illo comederint
non morientur in eternum. et extensa manu confregit de fauo partem
minimam et conedit ipse. reliquum—que dedit in os assenech et dixit.
Ecce comedisti panem uite et uncta es crismate sacro. et ab hodierno
die carnes tue renouabuntur et ossa tua sanabuntur. et uterus tua
erit indeficiens. et iuuentus tua senectutem non uidebit. et pulcritudo

"I pray the, lord, to sitte a while upon þis bed so clene,
For man ne womman satt neuer þeron by no maner mene.

- 510 "And I schall make a bord redy, and offre to your plesir,
Breed and wyn fro my celer, ful swete & redolent,
And when ye haue ete, & drynke, þen aftir your desire,
Ye mai folwe forth your way after your entent."
The aungel saide, "bring yt sone, þerto I consent."
515 And asneth sette a newe bord with busnesse & haste,
And went to fette breed & wyne plesant to his taste.

The aungel said, "a hony combe bring þu me ful sone."
And for sche had non redy sche stood al dismaid.
Sche saide, "I schal send a chyld in to the feeld anone
520 Of hour heritage, to fette on, sone yt schal be rayd."
"Entre in to þi celer," the aungel to here saide,
"And thu schalt fynde an hony comb redy on the bord,
Take and bryng yt to me;" and asneth sayd, "my lord,

- Knowyth wel þer is non, in no maner of wyse."
525 "Entre þi celer," quod þe aungel, & on þer schalt þu fynde."
Sche entred in, an hony comb sche fond of a gret assise,
Also white as þe snowe, clene & pure in kynde,
Of odour swete, and asneth meruayled in her mynde,
And said, "trowest not þat of þis comb, þat þis man hath
ete,
530 For þe flauour ys as þe breeth of his mouth so swete."

And anon sche tok þe comb and afore hym sette,
The angel said, "whi saidest þu, þer was non in þi celer?
Now hast þu brouht a ful fair on, þat was in þi recette."

tua non deficiet et eris sicut metropolis edificata omnium confugiencium
ad nomen domini dei omnipotentis regis seculorum et extendit manum
et tetigit fauum quem fregerat et factus est totus integer sicut prius.
Extensaue manu dextra tetigit digito suo indice summitatem mellis
prospicientem uersus orientem. et retraxit digitum suum ad seipsum.
et induxit super extremum faui quod respiciebat ad occasu, et uia

And asneth *with* gret drede saide in this maner,
 535 "Lord, *non* swych honycumb in *gouernance* hadde I there,
 But by *commaundement* of þi mouth, so yt was do,
 For the odour þer of ys lik the breth of þi mouth also."

And þe aungel smyled then, *with* lauhyng cuntenance,
 For þe wisdom of asneth, vpon here intelligence,
 540 He called here vnto hym, his right hand he did hance,
 Vpon here heed; schee loked on hym, *with* shame & reuer-
 ence,
 He gaf here þen hys benison of gracious influence.
 He saide to here, "þu art blessed for" þu hast left þe fay
 Of alle *maner* fals ydolys, and beleuist in god veray.

545 "And blessed be thei, þat come to god in holy penance,
 For þei schul ete of this comb, þat bees made of paradise,
 Of the dew of rosis þere, þat are of gret plesance,
 The angelis of god schul ete also, þis comb of prise,
 And who þat eteth of þe same schal neuer dye in no wyse."
 550 After he brak it and ete a part of þat hony swete,
 The remenant he putte in asneth mouth & bad here to ete.

The aungel saide, "lo, þu hast ete of þe bred of lyf,
 & þu art enoynted *with* holi creme, & þi flesh fro this day
 Schal be renued, & þi bonys cured from al strif,
 555 And þi vertu neuer faile, þe sothe now I the say.
 Thy Iuuent schal haue *non* age, þi beaute schal laste ay,
 Of alle þat fle to oure lordis name, god & heuene kyng,
 Thu schalt be as Cite bild of ioye, *withoute* endyng."

²⁰ for repeated in MS.

digiti eius facta est in sanguinem. Extendit manum suam secundo
 & tetigit summitate digiti sui fauum mellis iuxta partem respicientem
 ad aquilonem. & traxit eum super partes respicientes ad meridionem
 et facta est uia digiti eius in sanguinem. aspiciente assenech et ait.
 inspicie fauum. et exierunt de fauo apes multe candide sicut nix. et
 ale earum purpuree sicut iacinctus circumdederunt omnes assenech &

He touched þe comb broke *with* his hand, hool it was anone,
 560 He touched þe hony *with* hys fynger upon þe este partie,
 He drow his fynger ageyn to hym to þe west part sone,
 And þe way of his fynger was mad al blodi,
 He drow his fynger þeron fro þe north to þe sowth surly;
 The way of hys fynger þer was *turned* in to blood,
 565 And asneth biheld al that he did, in his lift side sche stood.

The aungel saide, "vpon þe comb behold & take hede,"
 & bees come oute þerof ful fele, & white as þe snow,
 Here wynges were of purple hewe, aboute here þei yede,
 & wrouthe a honycomb in her handis & ete þerof Inow.
 570 The aungel saide þen to þe bees as I schal tel yow,
 "Go ye now in to *your* place." þei wente toward þe est,
 Into paradis. þe angel saide, "asneth, al this þu seest?"

She answered, "ye , my lord," þe aungel saide þenne,
 "So my wordis schul be fulfild þat I haue said to þe."
 575 T[h]e comb he touched *with* his hand, & fire bygan to
 brenne,
 And consumed þe comb anon, not hurtyng bord ne tre.
 The fragrant odour of þat brennyng yt was swete & fre.
 Asneth saide, "I haue seuen maidenenes on o nyght bore,
With me, as my sisteres I loue hem alle þerfore.

580 "To blesse hem as þu hast me afore þe I hem calle."
 "Calle on," he saide: sche called sone; þei come to his
 presence,
 The aungel saide, "almyghti god lord blesse you alle,
 Be ye to þe city of refute seven pileris *in* assistance,
 & alle dwellyng in þat Cite schul reste on *your* prudence."
 585 The aungel saide to asneth þen, "þis bord away þu dihte."

operabant in manibus eius fauam mellis & manducauerunt ex eo. et
 ait angelus apibus. ite in locum uestrum. & abierunt omnes uersus
 orientem in paradisum. & ait angelus. sic erunt omnia uerba que locutus
 sum ad te hodie. et extendit tercio angelus manum suam & tetigit
 fauam. et ascendit ignis de mensa & comedit fauam & mensam non
 tetigit. & fragancia faui dulcis ualde facta est.

Sche turned and saw like a char with foure hors passyng
 In heuen toward the est like flame of fire reed,
 The hors assembling to þe flame, of þunder leihtnyng
 Sche saw þe aungel vpon þe char standyng in þat steed,
 590 þat he was aungel sche was unknowe þerfore sche said
 with dreed,
 "Alas. I haue spoke with godis aungel, haue mercy on þi
 hand maide,
 For þe wordis I spak in þi presence in ignorance I hem
 saide."

And asneth yet þus spekyng, a younge man cam ful faste
 Of þe seruantes of putifaris, & to here he saide,
 595 "Ioseph þe stronge man of god cometh here in haste,
 His messenger ys at þe gate." and asneth forth sche braide
 And stood aside in a tresance, sche was ful wel apaide,
 Ioseph entred into halle, þe gatis men did spere,²⁷
 And shitte out alle straungeris þat no man schul hym dere.

600 And asneth wente to mete ioseph out of þe tresance goyng.
 Ioseph saw here & gan to wondir upon [here?] beaute
 bright,
 For sche was chaunged & enbelised by þe angelis
 communynge,
 & ioseph saide, "who art þu? telle me anon riht."
 "I am þi handmaide," quod sche, "to þi commaundement
 diht,

605 And alle mamettis I haue do away, & utterli forsake,
 þe aungel of god fedde me today & heuenly fode me take,

²⁷ *spredere* sic MS.

CXXII DE BENEDICCIÓNE VII. VIRGINUM ET CONIUGIO
 ASSENECH.

Et dixit assenech ad angelum. domine sunt michi vii. uirgines
 nutritæ mecum ab infancia & una nocte mecum genitæ. uocabo eas &
 benedices eas sicut me. quas ille iussit uocari. & benedixit eas dicens.
 benedicat uos dominus deus altissimus & sitis sicut vii. columnæ ciuitatis
 refugii. & iussit angelus assenech ut leuaret mansas. quam cum leuatam

And saide, 'I haue gyfe þe today wyf unto Ioseph,
 And he schal be thi spouse, in the wordle *withoute* ende;
 & saide my name, schulde no more be called asneth,
 610 But Cite of refute and þi lord god schal þe sende,
 'Moche peple þat þu schale turne & to almyhty god wende'
 He saide me more, 'to ioseph forth now schal I passe,
 And speke²⁸ þise wordis in his eris, of þe more & lasse.'

"Now þu knowyst, my lord Ioseph, yf þe aungel cam to þe,
 615 And spoke to þe of me the wordis þat I shewe."
 Þen ioseph sayde, "of hiest god, asneth, blessed þu be,
 & þi name, in kynredis blessed of kynredes schal renewe,
 For god of heuen loued þe & send me his angel trewe,
 & spake of the to me þise wordis; & þerfore, maide com ner,
 620 What ys þe cause þu standist fro me now so fer?"

And ioseph streihte out his hand, & loueli gan her brace,
 Þei kiste þen bothe in same *with* cuntenance excellent,
 Then saide sche, "my lord Ioseph, entre into oure place."
 Sche ladde hym in by þe right hand, here fadir was absent,
 625 Sche broughte *water* to wasse his feet, *with* ful trewe entent,
 And he asked anoper maide to whasshe ys fete þere,
 And asneth saide, "I schal hem wasshe, ye ar my lord dere,

"Fro hennys forth I am þin awne þi handmaid & þi thrall,
 Whi askest þu anothir maide to wasshe þi feet here?
 630 Thi feet ar myn owne feet, þi handdis also *with* all,
 And þi soule ys my soule, þu are thn myn owen fere."
 Sche constreyned hym & weesh hys feet *with* ful good
 chere.

²⁸ spake MS.

se ponere pergeret recessit angelus ab oculis eius. & reuersa uidit sicut currum. iiii, equorum procedentem uersus orientem in celum. Cumque oraret assenech ut indulgeret ei cum tam audaciter locuta erat cum eo. ecce unus adolescens ex famulis putifaris nunciauit dicens. ecce ioseph dei fortis uenit. iam enim procurator eius est ad portas atrii nostri. festinauitque assenech in occursum ioseph & stetit in ypodromio

And he behold here faire handis of beaute þer was no misse
He tok here by þe right hand and louely did here kysse.

635 He made here þen sitte by hym vpon his right hand;
Here fadir here modir & here kynreed com out of þe feld
Of here heritage, and wondering stil thei gan stande.
The glorious beaute of here douhter mervailus þei beheld.
Thei saw here sitte with ioseph, reuerence to hym þei yeld.
640 More þei mervailed þat sche wered on þe stole of here wed-
dyng,
And after þei ete & drinke togedir, gretly enioyng.

Then saide putifar to ioseph, "to morwe I schal calle
Alle þe guvernouris of pharao and princes of egipt lande,
And make espousailes vnto you, my douhter take þu
schalle,

645 Vnto þi wyf." þen saide ioseph, "thu schalt vnderstande,
I schal go myself tomorwe, and þat werke take on hande,
& speke to pharao of egipt kyng, my fadir of gret honour,
Of al his land he hath me mad chief prince & guvernour.

"And I schal speke in his eris of asneth pleasantly,

650 And he schal yeve here me to wyf with solempnite."
Then said putifar, "go forth with pees ful obeisantly,"
But with putifar he dwelled al nyght with tranquillite,
And with asneth sclepte he not, but said in verite
"His is no right þat a man þat wirshipeth god an hihe
655 Afore espousailes in no wyse with his wyf to lye."

Ioseph ros vp tymely, to kynge pharao he goes,
And said, "graunte me to wyf asneth, þe maide reuerent,

domus & cum intrasset ioseph atrium saltauit eum assenech. & dixit
ei uerba que erat locutus angelus ad se & lauit pedes eius. Crastina
die rogauit ioseph pharaonem assenech in uxorem & dedit eam illi
pharao & imposuit eis coronas aureas meliores quas habebat & fecit
eos osculari ad inuicem & fecit eis nupcias & cenam magnam ultra vii.
dies & precepit ut nemo faceret opus in diebus nupciarum ioseph. &

The douhter of preest putifar of olinpoleos.”
 & pharao saide, “to þe, ioseph, þe maide is congruent,
 660 For sche is a maide clene as thu, tak to her to þin entent.
 Be sche to þe þi dere spouse in wordle euerlastynge.”
 And pharao send to putifar his douhter forth to bringe.

Afore pharao asneth stood in his hihe presence
 And he wondering on here beaute, “endure with þe For ay
 * * * * *
 665 The rightful god of ioseph hath chose þe his spouse today,
 * * * * *

And ioseph is called the sone of god of hih dignite,
 And þu schalt be called his owen spouse in perpetuite.”

Pharao þen tok hem bothe and here hedis frette
 With crounys of pure gold, þat riche wer of atire,
 670 Upon þe right side of ioseph asneth þen he sette,
 And laide his handis on here hedis & saide in his desire,
 “Blesse you now þe lord god of þe heuenly empire,
 And fulfille you eternally with glorie, ioye, and blisse.”
 And after turned hem mouth to mouth, & togedir did hem
 kysse.

675 And after pharao dide þe weddynges to be solempnised,
 Callyng alle princes and gouernours of egipt land þerto,
 A rial feste by seuen dayes during was deuised,
 And pharao declaret a newe decree to alle hys land also,
 Sayngge, “what man þat ony werke euer here after do
 680 In the day, þat ioseph & asneth were wedded inne,
 Thei schul dye in grevus deth, for that gret synne.”

And after Ioseph knewe his wyf sche conceived sone,
 And bar manasses & effraim, þis was here procreacion,

uocauit filium dei & assenech filiam altissimi. COMGESTOR. Nati
 sunt ei filii duo priusquam e ueniret famas. & uocauit primum manasses
 quod est obliuio. dicens obliuisci me fecit deus laborum meorum &
 domus prioris mei. secundum uocauit effraim quod est fructificacio
 dicens Crescere me fecit dominus in terra paupertate mee.

And aftir asneth seurly to god sche mad here mone,
 685 Remembering here olde synne by prive meditacion,
 And after mournyng þus sche saide,²⁹ with gret lamentacion,
 "Lord, synned I haue synned, moche synned in þi presence,
 Asneth, dowhter of putifar, pardone myn offence.

"Most foulest in my fadir hous I was of gouernance,
 690 A maide enhansed & right proud, I haue synned, lord, to þe,
 Fals godis herid with oute nombre to my daliance,
 & ete bred of her sacrifice so synned in þat degre,
 Synned, lord, I haue synned in þi sihte fre,
 & ete of bord of pestilence, bred þat is straungling,
 695 & dranke of þe chalis of defaute in þi presence synnyng.

"And of the lord of heuene I was ignoraunt,
 Not tristyng in þe hihe god þat art lyf eternal;
 I haue synned, lord, in þi presence, my synne is displiant.
 For I triste on my richesse & my beaute with alle,
 700 I haue synned, lord, lift up with pride, confesse so I schall,
 I was dispisyng euery man on erthe with errour,
 Ther stood neuer man in my presence þat I gaf fauor.

"Alle my woweris I dispised, of hem I hadde disdeyn.
 Synned, lord, I haue synned in presence of þi face,
 705 For I saide, þer was no prince with glorie þat was veyn
 þat þe girdel of my maydenhed was worthi to vnbrace.
 I willed to marie þe kyngis sone, so proud was my trace,
 Synnyng, lord, I haue synned contynuyng in þi presence,
 Til ioseph þe myhty man of god tok me with excellence,

²⁹ sche saide *rep. in MS.*

CXXIII. DE DESCENSU ISRAHEL IN EGIPTUM ET SEDVC-
 CIONE DAN & GAD. EX HISTORIA SACRA. Itaque cum per vii
 annos ubertatis collegisset ioseph frumentum & ingrueret fames super
 omnes terrarum. Iuxta somnii coniectura. apperuitque horrea.
 uendiditque egipciis. insuper & hisque de aliis ad emendum ueniebant
 prouinciis. inter quos fratres suos agnoscens. sed ab eis incognitus.
 durius allocutus est eos. exploratores eos esse dicens id est explora-

- 710 "For as þe fyssh by the hook ys take by distresse,
 So ys beaute drow me to hym by vertuus prouydence;
 And ladde me to almighty god *with* gret gentylesse,"³⁰
 And did me taste of þe drynke of [t]he *eternal* sapience,
 And now I am mad his conthorall by his aduertence
 715 Ay to dwelle *with* hym in wordle *with* oute ende,
 Synned, lord, I haue synned remission þu me sende."

- And after seven year were passed of plentevus abundance
 þer bygunne seuen yeer of hunger scars & chere,
 And Iacob herd of Ioseph, and *with* gret plesance,
 720 He com into egipt land *with* his kynrede in fere,
 In the secunde monthe the secunde yeer when vitale was
 dere,
 The on and twenti day of þe monthe, Israell cam don then
 And descended *with* his kynred into þe land of iessen.

- Then saide asneth to ioseph, "the fadir I schal go se,
 725 For a god he is to me, þi fader israel."
 & ioseph saide, "to se hym com now forth *with* me."
 And þei com to iacob to þe land of iessen well.
 And ioseph bretheren mette hem *with* reuerence & reuell;
 þei wirshipped hym, don upon þe erthe louely obeyng,
 730 Thei entred in to iacob where was his loggyng.

- Israel sitt yng on his bed, old & of gret age,
 Asneth saw hym & meruailed for iacob was good in sight,
 Of hys age ful reuerent, as youthe of fair parage,
 His heed white as þe snow, his berd to þe brest right,
 735 Al white was sitt yng, and his yees schynyng as liht,

³⁰ gentynesse MS.

torum pena dignos maximeque si de beniamin uera non dicerent de quo timeret quod & in eum aliquid deliquissent. quo tandem ab eis cum muneribus adducto. seipsum illis cum fletu innotuit. uultuque ac uerbis placidissimum. Datis insuper muneribus patrem ad se uenire mandauit iacob itaque per uisionem a domino confortatus descendit in egiptum cum lxvi animalibus. ita quod ipse cum eis & ioseph cum

Hys synewes schuldurs & his armes were stable & vailant,
Hys knes schynys ant his feet like to a geaunt.

And asneth salued hym on here knes *with* humble conte-
nance,

Then said iacob to ioseph, "my sone thy wyf þis is?"

740 He said, "ye." þan iacob this wordis to here gan vance,
"Blessed be thu, doughter of hiest god," & after he did
here kys.

And after þei ete & drunke togedir, *with* gret ioy & blys,
And þenne Ioseph & asneth afore hem were sente.

745 In the right side of asneth was leuy in assistance,
And symeon þe left *partie* wente by & by,
& asneth loued leuy wel for hys intelligence.
And after as sche in pharaois hous walked plesauntly,
Pharaois sone beheld here as he lokod an hy,
750 þat was his firste bygeten child, his sone & his here.
Anon he brente on here for loue, her beaute was so fair.

Wherefore he languyshed for loue, & nyste what to do.
But sone he sente messagers to symeon & leui,
þat were þe bretheren of ioseph, & thus said hem to:

755 "I knowe wel þat ye are men stronge and mihty,
And meny a sichym ye han slayn *with* swerd manfully,
And now I pray you tenderly for to helpe me,
I schal you gife goold & siluer & men gret plente.

"Seruantis assis & chamelis to youre lote schal falle

760 I warne you þat to *your* brother I haue gret enuye,
For he hath asneth to his wyf, ordeyned me first of alle.

duobus filiis similiter fuerunt lxx. Eratque cxxx annorum quam
ioseph eum in conspectu pharaonis introduxit. eique terram gesen ad
habitandum dedit.

EX PARVA GENESI. In anno secundo famis mense ii xxi die
mensis uenit israel in egiptum eum uniuersa cognacione sua. intrauit
terram gesen. uidit que assenech iacob & admirata. quum senectus eius

þerfore asneth now to me, on my swerd schal he dye,
 Asneth to spouse þen schal I haue I tel you trulye.
 Then schal I take you as my brethere trusty & trewe
 765 And yf ye dispise my cunseil sore ye schul yt rewe.

“For my swerd ageyns you þen schal I araye.”
 Then spak leui unto hym *with* riht bolde chere,
 “Wherto speketh my lord þise wordis us to afraye?
 We are men þat worship god, ant oure fadir dere
 770 Ys þe child of his god and our brother in al manere
 Ys dredyng gretly god, thi word hou schul we do?
 To synne so in godis *presence* & oure fadirs also.

“Therefore heer now my wordis & do not þyn entent,
 For howre brother tok here not of his owen acceptance,
 775 But by the lawe of thi fadir & of his consent,
 And yf þu dwelle in þi purpoos of wykked purueance,
 Oure swerdis, lo, in our handis wyt þe in variance,
 In þi *presence with* oure brother ful redi for to dye.”
 And when pharaois sone herd þis, he dred hem gretlye.

780 Then symeon and leui went out fro his *presence*,
 And pharaois sone was replete *with* sorwe, drede, & ire.
 To iniure he dradde ioseph for his gret prudence.
 Yet on þe beaute of asneth his corage was a fire,
 His meyne þen saide unto hym, to plesance of his desire,
 785 “Lo þe sonys of handmaides to rachell & to lye,
 Of bale and of zelphe to ioseph haue envye.

“þei wil be redy to do þi wil;” & forth þei were fett,
 & pharaois sone vnto hym þen did hem calle,

erat speciosa sicut iuuentus. Erat quippe caputeius candidissima
 sicut nix. et barba candida sedens super pectus eius. oculi eius ful-
 guarantes. & nerui eius & humeri et brachia firma. genua & crura et
 pedes ut gigantis et benedixit eis iacob et osculatus est. Et reuersi
 sunt post prandium ioseph et assenech in domum. et leui cum eis et
 symeon. Et cum uidisset filius pharaonis assenech in domo patris sui

& saide, "lo, here lyf and deth afore your face ys fett.
 790 Taketh þe lyf and not þe deth, I cunseyl you *with* al.
 I herde ioseph sey to my fadyr, *þat* ye wer children þral
 'And not my bretheren, I abyde hem vtterly to destruye
 After the deth of my fadir & al here generacion nuye,

Thei schul neuwer enherite *with* vs, þe sonis of seruage,
 795 Þise solde^a me to þe Ismalitis, I schal yelde he[m] malice,
 þat þei maligned ageyns me in here gret outrage.'
 My fadyr pharao *preised* hym & said *þat* he was wyse
 And saide 'I schal werke *with* þe after þi deuyse.'
 And after þei hadde herde þise wordis of þe sone of pharao,
 800 Þei said troubled gretly "lord [what] schal we do?"

He saide, "my fadir pharao I schal sle þis nyht,
 For he is as fadir to ioseph & loueth hym gretly,
 And ye youre brother ioseph to deth ye schul dyht,
 þen schal I haue asneth to wyf, *þat* fair is & louely,
 805 & ye schul haue part of myn heritage as my brethre tristy.
 þen saide þe bretheren Gad & dan, "þi men lord we be,
 What þu cumaundis hit schal be do & more we telle þe.

"We herde ioseph to asneth saie to morwe þu schal go
 Into felde of howere heritage for now is heruest seson
 810 And commaundet six hundred men to passe *with* here also,
 Commaunde vs, lord, mo fihthyng men *þat* we may by reson
 Go afore hem on þe nyht & leye a bushment *with* treson,
 Bi the brook & hide vs þere in the spers of þe redis,
 And tak *with* the fyve hundred archeris what so euer nedis,

^ascholde MS.

deambulantem. exarsit in pulchritudine eius. et locutus est leui et symeon ut interficeret ioseph. et haberet eam uxorem quam illi debebatur. et daret eis aurum et argentum multum. Qui non intend-
 erunt in sermones eius. et cepit filius pharaonis accusare ioseph apud fratres suos dan .et gad. qui erant filii ancillarum iacob. dicens se audisse ioseph dicentem apud pharaonem quod post mortem patris sui destrueret eos. ne esset heredes cum fratribus suis. eo quos filii ancillarum. et eum uendidissent ysmahelitis et inuiderent ei. per-
 suasitque eis ut interficerent ioseph. et ipse interficeret pharaonem

815 "And go afore vs a good way fert out in lengthe,
 And asneth *with* ynne our bushment þen come schalle,
 & we schulle sle here men echon, þat be *with* here by
 stren[g]the,
 And asneth wil fle on here char & in our handis falle,
 þu schalt parfourme þen þi wil and thi desires alle,
 820 Then schul we ioseph & hys children sle byfore þi ye."
 When pharaois sone þise wordis herde, he enjoyed gretly

And sende to hem two þousand þat armed were briht,
 þei wente and hidde hem by þe broke in þ[e][r]eed²² slily,
 & pharaois sone roos up on the same nyht,

825 And com to his fadir chamber to entre in prively.
 His fadir wacche forbad hit hym, & told þe cause why,
 "Thi fadir hed of wacche it aketh & now reste hath take,
 He forbad entre to euery man þat non scholde hym wake."

And when he herde þise wordis he departed þan,
 830 And toke five hundred archiris, afore þe gate he wente,
 After þat þat yt was spoke bothe by gad ant dan.
 And asneth aros tymely to ioseph sche here mente,
 "I go to þe feld of oure heritage after þyn entente,
 But sor[l]y dredeth now my soule þat we schul parted be."
 835 Ioseph said "dred nothyng, for god is with þe,

And schal kepe the fro al disese, as þe appel of þe ye,
 For I schal go and gif bred to þe land aboute."
 And bothe þenne þei toke here way, & asneth cam bye
 Vpon the brook, and six hundred men *with* here in a route,
 840 And sodeynly the hus[h]ment brake on hem a shoute,
 And slowe hem ful cruelly in þe egge of the swerde,
 And beniamin fledde *with* asneth²³ on here char aferd.

²² þeed MS.

²³ asketh MS.

patrem suum qui tanquam pater ioseph. Quod cum uellet facere nocte prohibuerunt custodes patrus sui introire ad eum dicentes. pater tuus doluit caput et non dormit et prohibuit nobis ne quis ad eum intraret. nec etiam armatis perrexit ad locum insidiarum ubi erant dan et

- A man *þer* scaped away, *þat* was *with* *asneth* there,
 And told *leui* and his brother in haste of the *afrai*.
 845 Men of armes *þei* tok forth, hors, harneis, and geer,
 & after *asneth* quicly thei folwed on the way,
 And sone in haste *þei* come there *þat* *þe* busment lay,
 And fille on hem sodeinly, & gaf hem dethis wounde,
 Gad & dan entred *þe* *redis* & hid hem *þat* stounde.
- 850 Beniamyn, abydyng *with* *asneth*, saw pharaois sone com on
 To sette hand upon here, *þerof* he was war,
 In the lift side of *þe* sculle he smote hym *with* a ston,
þat fro his hors *with* *þe* same to *þe* grounde he hym bar,
 As good as ded *þere* he lay, he gaf hym swych a scar.
 855 His horsmen and archeris when *þei* saw *þat* siht,
þei fledde to *þe* *redis* & hidde hem *þer* right.

- When beniamyn saw symeon & *leui* comynge
 He was glad, and gaf *asneth* wordis of good chere,
 And after *þei* assembled ful gretly enioynge
 860 Askynge after gad and dan yf *þei* sawe hem there,
 Willyng to haue slayn hem *with* *purpos* entere,
 But *asneth* saw *þei* souhte her brether to sle hem in rage,
 And myldely *with* softe wordis her w[r]ath sche gan swage.

- “Ye schal not now do *þis* *þynge*, youre brethere *þei* be,
 865 Of the kynde of youre fadir and yf ye slowe hem so,
 Ye schulde be repref to alle men tristep to me,
 And make your fadir sori & sette his hert in wo.”
 And when sche hadde þus said her ire swaged tho,
 Aftir *þei* tok up pharaois sone, *þe* blood fro hym wasshyng,
 870 And sette hym on a hors, his wondis softe byndyng;

gad. quum illuc debebant pergere ioseph et assenech dc. viris qui omnes ab insidiis trucidati sunt preter unum qui fugit ad symeon et leui. assenech autem fugit in curru et cum ea beniamin. Symeon autem et leui assumentes omnes qui secum erant armatos persecuti sunt eos. Et irruerunt in eos subito et plurimos occiderunt. Dan autem et gad absconsi sunt in densitate calami.

þen þei laidede hym to hys fadir, & told hym more & myn.
 Pharao thanked gretly god þat he was not slayn,
 þe þridde day he was ded be þe wounde of beniamin,
 And pharao sorwed sore for hym and gretly did complayn,
 875 And þat sorwe *with* sikenesse so sore gan hym constrayn
 þat pharao dide in þe age of nynty & nyne yeer,
 Leuyngē his kyngdom to ioseph þat was hym leef & deer.

Ioseph regned nobeli þere wyth gret prosperite
 Fourty yeer and eyht, ful *graciously* gouernynge,
 880 And after he gaf his diademe to pharaois sone fre,
 þat was at his fadir deth at þe brest soukyng,
 And ioseph was called in egipt fadir to þe kyng.
 þus endeth the storie of asneth to youre remembrance,
 My rude translacion I pray you tak hit *with* plesance.

[Epilogue]

885 Ha, cruell deeth! contrarious to creatures in kynde,
 Ha, deeth dispitous! who may aduertise
 Thi mourther, thi malice, who may haue in mende
 The myschief, that to mankynde þu dost exercise?
 Thi rigour, þi rancour who may devyse?
 890 The matyng of þi miserie no man may endure,
 For thi chekkes conclude eueri creature.

Thu are to alle creatures hidous to beholde,
 Thu pyllour, thu pirate, cesse of þi prise.
 Thi felonye ys multiplied in so many folde
 895 That al the worlde generally of the, deþ, agrise.
 Stynt of þi malice, for wyth thy malgyse
 Louers ful lykyngē and lusty in game
 Thu marrest *with* myschief, and makest hem lame.

CXXIIII DE MORTE PHARAONIS ET IACOB ET IOSEPH.
 HELINANDUS IIII LIBRO. Anno principatus ioseph xii mortuus
 est pharaο sub quo uiverat ioseph. quem commestor altero nomine dicit
 appellatum nefrem. De huius autem morte sic dicit historia assenech.
 post illud bellum sive superius memoratum inter filium pharaonis et

Thu tyraunt on emperat, *with* thi tene & treson,
 900 Thi solas of soueraignes þu dost siluestrise,³⁴
 And ladies likyng thu sleest out of seson,
 And reuest hem here ryalty *with* þi reprise,
 Thyn insaciable malice who may acomplise?
 When þat loueli ladies thu leyst so lowe
 905 And here bright beaute þu blemishest in a throwe.

For þi malice me semeth reames sholde arise,
 To destruye cruell deeth, and do hym of dawē—
 But oon wynted on me then “war quod þe wyse,
 And cesse of þi sentence for symple is þi sawe,
 910 For deeth vniuerselly the worlde schal vengyse,
 So ys the tyraunt tytled to that uictorie,
 By adam the alderman of old auncetrie.”

Then sorwed I that sentence recouered by assise,
 And mourned for my maystresse here marred in molde.
 915 There ys countour ne clerk bounte can decyse,
 In vertu here wommanhed was volupid many folde.
 Discreet, deuote, diligent, deeth, thu mayst agrise
 To represe so noble, so gentill a creature,
 In tendir age vntymely agayn the ordir of nature.

920 O myghty lord, w[h]os goodnesse neuer schal fynyse,
 Haue mercy on the soule of my dere maistresse.
 The fendis power fro that soule chare & chastise.
 Deliuere here, *gracious* lord, fro peyne and distresse.
 Endowe here in thi place of plesaunt paradise,

³⁴ From O.F. *siluestre*. The verb does not, I think, occur in French.

symeonem et leui, beniamin inquit sedens in curru cum assenech uidens
 filium pharaonis uenientem contra se ut tolleret assenech lapidem de
 torrente arripiens, percussit eum in ceruice sinistra. et ededuxit eum
 de equo super terram. qui mortuus postea uidens beniamin symeonem
 et leui uenientes confortatus est. qui querebant fratres suos dan et
 gad ut interficerent eos. quorum ira conpescuit. illi uero leuantes
 filium pharaonis a terra. lauerant plagam eius ligauerunt eam et

925 And receyue here blyssed lord upon thi right side,
In they blysse eternally wyth³⁵ the to abyde.

Of lordis lyne & lynage sche was, here sche lyse,
Bounteuus benigne, enb[e]leshed with beaute,
Sage, softe, and sobre, an[d] gentyll in al wyse,
930 Florishyng and fecunde with femenyng beaute,
Meke, mylde, and merciful, of pite sche bar þe prise.³⁶
Comely, kynde, and curteis, in nobleye of nurture,
Vernant in alle vertu, plesaunt and demure.

Here the manuscript ends.

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³⁵ MS. whyt *sic*.

³⁶ The reader will have noticed that this rhyme runs through each stanza of the Epilogue. This variation of the ballade-form is unique.

duxerunt eum ad patrem suum pharaonem. et narrauerunt omnia uerba hec. pharao uero gratias egit quod non interfecerunt eum. tercio die uero mortuus est filius pharaonis de uulnere. Et pharao non multo post mortuus est dolore mortis filii sui annorum, xcix. Et reliquit regnum suum ioseph qui regnauit pro paruo in egipto annis xlvi. et post hoc dedit dyadema filio pharaonis qui erat ad ubera quum mortuus est pharao et ioseph nuncupatus est pater eius in terra egipti.

Note: Lydgate refers to this legend in his poem *To Mary the Queen of Heaven*, where he compares the Virgin to 'Assenek off Egypt, of beute pereles.' (M.S. Bodl. Tanner 110 fol. 244 and elsewhere). I have not found any other references to her in English literature.

H. N. M.